

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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Contact: Kevin O'Connell
202-225-6335

HINCHEY REINTRODUCES PATIENT SAFETY ACT

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today reintroduced legislation that would protect patients by requiring hospitals and nursing homes to make public important information about the quality of care available at their facilities. Called the Patient Safety Act, the bill would require public disclosure of specific information on nurse staffing levels, staff mix, and patient outcomes.

"With the continuing dominance of HMOs in the health care marketplace, patients are losing control over decisions about their health," said Hinchey. "The Patient Safety Act puts control back in patients' hands. This legislation would require hospitals to make public information about patient outcomes and about staffing levels, giving consumers the tools to make informed choices about where they receive their health care."

Hinchey praised the American Nurses Association for its leadership on patient protection legislation and called attention to the impact that managed care has had on nursing.

"We've all heard the horror stories about HMOs. Nurses live through them," Hinchey said. "They are probably far more aware than most people of the problems with HMOs that don't make the evening news—how they make hospitals change their rules, how they confuse patients, how they add an extra layer of bureaucracy precisely where it's least needed. Certainly nurses know how ceding control of health care to the insurance industry has affected staffing, as HMOs pressure hospitals to replace skilled, professionally trained nurses with unlicensed aides. The Patient Safety Act will give patients the information to make informed choices about their health care."

Hinchey first introduced the Patient Safety Act in the House in 1995 and has reintroduced it in each succeeding Congress. At the end of the 106th Congress, it had 32 cosponsors. U.S. Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) has introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

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